1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
MA11 Kurd MA11

The country houses of the Kūrds are for the most part—like those of their neighbours, the Armenians, already described—underground dwellings, with the cattle-stable communicating with the *selamlik*, or public-room. The cooking stove consists of an immense earthen jar, wider in the centre than at the top and bottom, which is sunk into the floor of the principal room. Into it a quantity of *tezek*, the native fuel of compressed straw and cow-dung, is thrown, and from an iron bar placed across the orifice a kettle is suspended by a chain. Over this stove the women sit, regardless of the smoke and flame issuing from the ground as from the crater of a volcano. The smoke finds its only exit by the little window high up in the wall, which admits the small modicum of light with which the inmates content themselves.

The furniture is very simple, being merely a few carpets and quilts, some mattresses, and a number of leather wallets, which contain the wearing apparel and other household goods not in general use. This apartment serves as kitchen, sitting- and sleeping-room combined, three or four generations finding rest and comfort within its four walls. Out of this room opens the store-room, which contains a cemented cistern, like an ancient sarcophagus in shape, and a number of earthen jars of different sizes, the largest quite four feet high, in shape like the Greek *amphora*. The cistern is used for making a kind of beer called *bóza*, a liquor called *nardenk*, extracted from the juice of the pomegranate, and other provisions for domestic

There is no electricity in Rowanduz, although it is connected with telegraph and telephone wires, and lighting is by fuel, gasoline, kerosene, or oil. After nightfall the streets are completely dark, save for a few shops or <u>chaykhanas</u> open late and a rare door-lantern burning for visitors, and it is customary for those walking at night to be preceded by a servant with a lantern, or to carry a light themselves.

Water is derived from a spring above the town, that which turns the mill <u>Ashi Shaykhi</u>, and flows down through the streets in small channels and pipes, frequently bridged or covered with flagstones. British engineers laid pipes connecting a series of three iron pumps to better utilize this water, but the pumps have long ceased to flow and are jokingly attributed by the better educated, such as the teachers, to Harun al-Rashid, the Abbasid caliph to whom a great number of ruined bridges and fortresses are referred by the villagers. In shallow ditches the water follows several routes through the town, sometimes in the open and sometimes through pipes, those of the British and a few segments laid by the townspeople themselves. Most of the larger houses have an interior tank or basin, and pipes, closed during most of the day, lead in from the ditches to these. The Kurds of this area, unlike some of their contemporaries in the Middle East, have definite ideas on what constitutes "clean" water, that which is cold and clear, although they may have no appreciation of its relative purity. Rashid Agha of Jindian, whose father's

information, it would be difficult to assign such a house plan to any definite cultural horizon, but the architectural attempt to conceal the women is clearly Islamic, and, while it had its initial expansion under the Arabic caliphates, probably had its greatest influence in Kurdistan under the Turks when such things were carried to an extreme, at the same time reinforced by the prestige of a ruling class, in most parts of the Ottoman Empire.

The entrance of the house requires special attention, for certain important customs surround it. The doors are of heavy timbers, swinging on iron hinges, and, lacking a metal lock, are bolted at night with a heavy wooden bar which is kept in place by a second piece above it on a pivot. The outer doorway may have a fuel lamp for night and in many cases is furnished with charms designed to ward off the evil eye, a belief which will be discussed in a later section. These are characteristically a blue porcelain plate, embedded in the mud wall-surfacing, or a pair of old shoes hung on a nail. The popular reasoning behind the second device is that it indicates to a person with the eye that "your malevolent glance is as powerful as our pair of old shoes," an explanation that probably has little to do with the origin of the custom. Whenever the construction of a house is completed, the new owner sacrifices an animal, a sheep or a goat, by cutting its throat before the door and smears some of the blood on the doorposts and the threshhold. Often he dips his hand in the blood, and applies it to the door, making by

4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11

in drawers in the dining room or bedroom in manifestation of the home's economic standard, were kept in this room, which thus became more a treasury than a lumber room. The articles of value not locked in there were carried on the person in the form of jewels. Wealth was hung on oneself and not impersonalized in the form of a costly piece of furniture or a valuable painting. This explains the striking contrast between the expensively clothed, be-jewelled women and their remarkably bare homes.

The flexibility of the Kurdish home must also be viewed in relation to the prevailing sleeping habits. To sleep was a family affair[32], (unless a married couple withdrew to one of the other rooms). There was no undressing when going to bed or lying down to rest on the rolled-out mattress. The women slept in the same clothes they had worn during the day, with the exception of the turban of the married woman, which was replaced by a light veil tied round the face and neck. The men slept in their home clothes, which might be pants and shirt, or, in the case of the more modernistic, who followed the customs of Baghdad, pyjamas—though not in the sense of a garment for the night. In Baghdad and in the provinces the Indian pyjama had returned, via Europe, to the Near East as a day and home garment. In Kurdistan it became day dress which was kept on when one went to bed. Nor was there any special morning or evening toilet. Ablutions were performed in order to reach a ritually-pure state, and were, like most of the daily life, closely connected with the demands of Islam. The greater or lesser washing of the body whereby one reaches a ritually-pure state, prior to prayer, is hardly personal hygiene as we understand it. Mouth, nose and hands were carefully cleansed after each meal, and the genitals were washed each time nature had been relieved, simply described by my interpreter as "to go to the water". When prior to the five daily prayers the small ablution, must be performed, which comprises the washing of face, hands, forearm and feet, and then passing the wet hand over the hair, not to mention the big cleansing of the whole body that must be done, for example, after menstruation or sexual intercourse[33], there is no need for any further morning or evening toilet.

Clothes were changed during the day if an urge was felt to do so, or if it was considered that the clothes one had on had become dirty or were not fresh enough. The term "going to bed and getting up" thus had nothing to do with dressing and undressing.

The lighting, even in so large a house and with such a numerous family, was confined to a big pressure lamp and a couple of smaller "kitchen lamps". The larger lamp hung during the day on a nail in the wall of the central room, and when darkness fell it was placed as a luminous centre of the family circle where this had "pitched camp", whether on the roof, in the courtyard, or in the central room. The lamp was placed on the ground or on one of the small, angular smoking tables. As lighting it was garish and most inadequate, which did not seem to worry the people who were able to work in the cookhouse by the light of a fire, or to wash at the garden basin in the evening by the light of the moon or the stars, and whose eyes were not accustomed to adequate light from several sources. One was quite used to being, and performing the evening tasks, in semi-darkness when outside the radius of the crude light from the lamp. In this clay house of the village aristocracy sporadic European elements could be found: mirrors, battery wireless receivers with velvet covers (only heard on the